

The National Association for Ethnic Studies

Ethnic Studies Review (ESR) is the journal of the National Association for Ethnic Studies (NAES). ESR is a multi-disciplinary international journal devoted to the study of ethnicity, ethnic groups and their cultures, and inter-group relations. NAES has as its basic purpose the promotion of activities and scholarship in the field of Ethnic Studies. The Association is open to any person or institution and serves as a forum for its members in promoting research, study, and curriculum as well as producing publications of interest in the field. NAES sponsors an annual spring conference.

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Ethnic Studies Review (ESR) is published by the National Association for Ethnic Studies for its individual and subscribing libraries and institutions. NAES is a member of the Council of Editors of Learned Journals.

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**Chicana/Latina Undergraduate Cultural Capital:
Surviving and Thriving in Higher Education**

**Maricela DeMirjyn
Colorado State University**

This study addressed the retention of Chicana/Latina undergraduates. The problem explored was one; how these women perceive campus climate as members of a marginalized student population and two; which strategies are used to “survive the system.” As a qualitative study, this work was guided by a confluence of methods including grounded theory, phenomenology and Chicana epistemology using educational narratives as data. The analysis indicated that Chicanas/Latinas do maintain a sense of being “Other” throughout their college experiences and this self-identity is perceived as a “survival strategy” while attending a mainstream campus. Further analysis also showed that Chicanas/Latinas begin their college careers with social/cultural capital and is used as a fluid source of support during their stay at the university.

**Chicano/Mexican “Culture” as a Rational Instrument
in the Human Sciences**

**Alexandro José Gradilla
California State University, Fullerton**

The use of “culture” as an analytical category by social scientists presents an opportunity to examine how professional discursive formations are used to make empirical assertions. The social fact of culture is neither uniform nor unitary. Traditionally, culture has been thought of as a product of disciplinary research, not necessarily a variable for empirical study. When culture is used as a tool or instrument of scientific methodology, it loses its fluid nature as a disciplinary discourse. In this essay, I examine the specific discussion of the epidemiologic health paradox that states that the Chicano/Mexican immigrant “culture” serves as a protective factor against many maladies that afflict other U.S. populations. Since the 1970s, this discussion of culture as a protective factor provides an interesting exposition of the uses of culture by empirical scholars.

Structuring Liminality: Theorizing the Creation and Maintenance of the Cuban Exile Identity

Jaclyn Colona
Florida International University

And

Guillermo J. Grenier
Florida International University

In this article, we examine the exilic experience of the Cuban-American community in South Florida through the dual concepts of structure and liminality. We postulate that in the case of this exilic diaspora, specific structures arose to render liminality a persistent element of the Cuban-American identity. The liminal, rather than being a temporal transitory stage, becomes an integral part of the group identity. This paper theorizes and recasts the Cuban-American exile experience in Miami as explicable not only as the story of successful economic and political incorporation, although the literature certainly emphasizes this interpretation, but one consisting of permanent liminality institutionalized by structural components of the exiled diaspora. We argue that the story of exemplary incorporation so prevalent in the academic literature is a result of structured liminality. We apply Turner's conceptualization to the creation and maintenance of the Cuban-American Exile Identity (Grenier and Perez, 2003). While testing the theoretical postulates is beyond the scope of this article, we interpret previous research through our new theoretical lens.

Thematic Shifts in Contemporary Vietnamese American Novels

Quan Manh Ha
The University of Montana

This article examines the thematic shifts in three contemporary Vietnamese American novels published since 2003: Monique Truong's *The Book of Salt*, Dao Strom's *Grass Roof, Tin Roof*, and Bich Minh Nguyen's *Short Girls*. I argue that by concentrating on the themes of inferiority and invisibility and issues related to ethnic and racial relationships in U.S. culture (instead of concentrating on the Vietnam War and the refugee experiences), some contemporary Vietnamese American authors are attempting to merge their voices into the corpus of ethnic American literature, which usually is thematically characterized by identity, displacement, alienation, and cultural conflict, etc. Each author explores the problems confronted by individuals caught up in various phases of the Vietnamese diaspora of the twentieth century.

These important works are treated primarily thematically, even as the theoretical approaches of various critics are employed to examine those themes. All three novels take Vietnamese American literature in new thematic directions, which signals great promise for future developments.

Key words: contemporary Vietnamese American novels, Monique Truong's *The Book of Salt*, Dao Strom's *Grass Roof, Tin Roof*, Bich Minh Nguyen's *Short Girls*, invisible identity.

First Impressions, "America's Paper" and Pre-Primary Black Presidential Candidates: *The New York Times* Coverage of Rev. Jesse Jackson (1983), Rev. Al Sharpton (2003), and Sen. Barack Obama (2007) Campaign Announcements and Initial Days

Ravi Perry

Recent research documents how party rules, election reforms, and the growth of primaries and caucuses have greatly changed the presidential nomination process. Acknowledging that most Americans get their information about presidential candidates through the news and that mass media have played a significant role in introducing candidates to potential voters, I conduct an longitudinal content analysis of the *New York Times* articles to ethnographically explain how language, article placement and content in 'America's Paper' has significantly impacted the framing of black presidential candidates' pre-primary presidential campaigns. In particular, the data reveal how the newspaper's coverage of the candidates appears to vary based on perceived viability and as willingness to vote for a black president increases.

Keywords: Black presidential candidates, New York Times, Pre-Primary Coverage, Content analysis, Sharpton, Jackson, Obama

**How Are They Racialized?
Racial Experiences of Chinese Graduate Students**

**Ying Wang
University of Maryland, College Park**

The present study explores the lived experiences of Chinese graduate students at a Southwestern University in order to find out how they experience race in daily life, what their interpretations of the racial experience are and how do racialized experiences shape their perceptions of life chances. The results indicate that the racialization process plays an important role in Chinese students' life through their lived experiences.

Most Chinese students have noticed race and some of them have experienced racial discrimination. However, Chinese students still hold up the importance of education and believe that education will blunt the racial edge.

Historical Consciousness and Ethnicity: How Signifying the Past Influences the Fluctuations in Ethnic Boundary Maintenance

**Paul Zanazanian
Concordia University**

Theorists tend to limit ‘history’s’ role in the dynamics of ethnicity to that generally played by collective memory. By bringing the notion of historical consciousness to the fore, new possibilities may, however, emerge for discerning how history, as one cultural mode of remembering among many others, impacts both ethnicity delineations and fluctuations in boundary maintenance. In encapsulating the many forms of commemoration as well as the different dimensions of historical thinking, the contribution of historical consciousness accordingly lies on how group members historicize temporal change for moral orientation in time. By likewise signifying past events for negotiating their ethnicity and agency toward the ‘significant Other’, social actors gate-keep group boundaries. And, depending on their capacity and willingness to recognize the ‘significant Other’s’ moral and historical agency in the flow of time, they can transform group delineations and render ethnic boundaries more porous.

Key Words: Historical Consciousness; Ethnicity; Group Boundaries; Boundary Maintenance; Boundary Fluctuations; Collective Memory; Disciplinary History; Moral and Historical Agency.

Poetic Economies: Phillis Wheatley and the Production of the Black Artist in the Early Atlantic World

**Rochelle Raineri Zuck
University of Minnesota Duluth**

This essay reads Wheatley as a key participant in the shifting economic and emotional relationships between artists, audiences, and texts that we now associate with romanticism. To recover facets of the role that the black artist played in the romantic movement(s), I examine three “portraits” of Wheatley—the poetic spectacle managed by her promoters, the actual portrait that appeared as the frontispiece for her *Poems on Various Subjects*, and the portrait that Wheatley herself created through her poetry. These portraits chart the tensions that circulated around the

figure of the black African artist in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world, tensions between genius and “barbarity,” originality and imitation, exteriority and interiority, and artistic expression and commodification. These binaries have often characterized the terrain of Wheatley studies, marking opposing positions and points of contention. I argue for a different way of reading, one that sees the figure of Phillis Wheatley as produced through the interplay of all of these forces within the context of the early black Atlantic. Wheatley and her work exposed both the emphasis on “authentic” self-expression through art and the ways in which the mental life of the artist became available to the reader as a consumer product. She created a different vision of the black artist than that which commonly circulated in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world, one that fused Christian discourse with romantic elements of imagination, Nature, and the poetic sublime, yet remained distant from and somewhat inaccessible to white readers.

Keywords: Wheatley, black Atlantic, poetry, romantic